(d) No target growth rate has been set for the industry for 2008-09. However, the Eleventh Plan (2007-12) envisages an industrial growth of 10% per annum on an average.

The Government has put in place various policy measures to promote broad based industrial growth, which includes, *inter-alia*, de-licensing of industrial capacity, liberalization of foreign trade regime to provide better access to inputs at competitive prices, rationalization and reduction in duty rates of customs and central excise, better infrastructure support, and liberal FDI regime, etc. In the Budget 2008-09, the Government has also reduced the excise duty across the board from 16% to 14% to boost the domestic demand for the manufacturing industry.

Import of edible oil

468. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to import larger quantity of edible oil during the current year because of mismatch between the demand and supply of edible oil likely to be five million tonnes; and

(b) the details of quantity of edible oil, Government is going to import during the current year including steps taken to control the day-by-day rise in its prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) In order to provide relief to the poorer sections of the society, from the rising prices of edible oil, the Central Government has introduced a scheme for distribution of 10 lakh tones of imported edible oils in 2008-09 at a subsidy of Rs. 15 per kg., through State Government/ Union Territories at the rate of 1 kg. per Ration Card per month.

The net availability of edible oils from all domestic sources during the year November 2007 - October 2008 is estimated at 84.92 lakh tones and the import of edible oils is estimated at 49.03 lakh tones. The excess demand of edible oils is met through imports.

Import of palm oil

469. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Competent Authority had allowed the import of palm oil for the last three years;

(b) if so, the quantity of palm oil imported, the agencies that are granted permission for the same, countries from which it is imported and the quantity distributed in each State for the last three years, year-wise, category-wise and State-wise;

(c) whether the above import had affected the price of coconut oil and the prices of coconut;

(d) if so, the details of steps taken to protect the prices of coconut oil and coconut; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Mining of limestone in N.E. States

470. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the North-Eastern States especially Meghalaya have surplus potential for mining limestone (mainstay for Cement units) which is being exported to Bangladesh without any value addition;

(b) whether many private investors evincing interest in investing in North-East on Cement manufacturing units with an aggregate capacity of more than 7 million tonnes, are now abandoning their investment plans due to discontinuance of excise duty exemption by Government; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) As per National Council for Cement & Building Materials (NCCBM) Report, Meghalaya has approximately 6.3 billion tonnes of cement grade limestone reserves. One cement unit Lafarge Umiam Pvt. Ltd., is exporting limestone to Bangladesh.

(b) and (c) No such information is available.

Patent of Ponni variety of rice

471. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that famous Ponni variety of rice grown exclusively in Cauvery delta in Tamil Nadu has not been registered for Geographical Indication (GI) in India;

(b) whether a Malaysian retail giant Syarikat Faiza has registered Ponni rice under the Malaysian Trade Mark Act;

(c) whether in the year 1977 a patent was awarded to a US Firm for Basmati variety of aromatic rice on which India had to fight for over four years to get the US patent reversed;

(d) whether the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University has decided to contest the Ponni trade mark registration in Malaysia; and

(e) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (e) As per records of the Geographical Indications Registry, no application has been filed in respect of Ponni seeking registration under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.